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The Bridal of Pennacook

Entertainment in Tableaux and Pantomime, Illustrating an Indian
Legend, Adapted from a poem by J. G. Whittier.

Whittier, John Greenleaf

By HARRIET H. PIERSON.

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CHARACTERS:

Old Indian Chief.

Young Indian Chief.

Indian Boy.

Two Indian Maidens.

Other Indian Men and Women.

A Reader.

DEC 26 1913

The Bridal of Pennacook.

Scene:—The stage may be decorated with boughs to suggest a forest. An Indian wigwam is placed in the background. Canvas draped over a clothes horse may be made to look very realistic. The foreground, where the tableaux are placed, is furnished with grass mats, a camp kettle, and any Indian trophies that may be obtainable. It is well, if possible, to make some changes in the stage setting to represent the two different homes. The tableaux are placed and announced as indicated, while the poem is read. All performers are dressed in Indian costumes.

INTRODUCTION.

Reader: Winnepurkit, Sachem of Saugus, married Weetamoo, a daughter of Passaconaway, the great Pennacook chieftain. The wedding took place at Pennacook, now Concord, N. H., and the ceremonies closed with a great feast. According to the customs of the chiefs, Passaconaway ordered a select number of his men to accompany the newly married couple to the dwelling of the husband, where in turn there was another great feast. Some time after, Weetamoo, expressing a desire to visit her father's house, was permitted to go, accompanied by a brave escort of her husband's chief men. When she wished to return, her father sent a messenger to Saugus, informing her husband, and asking him to come and take her away. But Winnepurkit returned for answer that he had escorted his wife to her father's

house in a style that became a chief, and that now if she wished to return, her father must send her back in the same way. This Passaconaway refused to do, and it is said that here terminated the connection of his daughter with the Saugus chief. This Indian legend has been used by Whittier as the theme of a poem called "The Bridal of Pennacook." This will now be illustrated by a series of tableaux and pantomimes.

(Prepare Tableau—1)

Passaconaway stands alone, holding tomahawk, looking fierce and grim. Frightened face of squaw peering through branches in background.

Reader:—

Lift we the twilight curtains of the Past,
 And, turning from familiar sight and sound,
 Sadly and full of reverence let us cast
 A glance upon Tradition's shadowy ground.
 Here mighty Passaconaway
 Held his long-unquestioned sway
 From the White Hills far away,
 To the great sea's sounding shores;
 Chief of chiefs, his regal word
 All the river Sachems heard,
 At his call the war-dance stirred,
 Or was still once more.
 Nightly down the river going,
 Swifter was the hunter's rowing,
 When he saw that lodge-fire glowing
 O'er the waters still and red;
 And the squaw's dark eyes burned brighter,
 And she drew her blanket tighter,
 As, with quicker step and lighter,
 From that door she fled.

(Show Tableau—1)

Announce—Passaconaway, the Pennacook Chieftain.

Reader:—

For that chief had magic skill,
And a Panisee's dark will,
Over powers of good and ill,
Powers which bless and powers which
ban, —
Wizard lord of Pennacook,
Chiefs upon their war-path shook,
When they met the steady look
Of that wise, dark man.

CURTAIN.

(Prepare Tableau—2)

*Passaconaway and his daughter seated on mats,
he holding a pipe, she stringing beads and shells.*

Reader:—

The soot-black brows of men, —the yell
Of women thronging round the bed, —
The tinkling charm of ring and shell, —
The Powah whispering o'er the dead! —
All these the Sachem's home had known,
When, on her journey long and wild,
To the dim World of Souls, alone,
In her young beauty passed the mother of his
child.
The Indian's heart is hard and cold, —
It closes darkly o'er its care,
And formed in nature's sternest mould,
Is slow to feel and strong to bear.
But from his child the Sachem drew
A life of Love and Hope, and felt
His cold and rugged nature through
The softness and the warmth of her young
being melt.

(Show Tableau—2)

Announce—The Chieftain and his daughter, Weetamoo.

Reader:—

A light and graceful form which sprang
 To meet him when his step was heard,—
 Eyes by his lodge-fire flashing dark,
 Small fingers stringing bead and shell
 Or weaving mats of bright-hued bark,—
 With these the household gods had graced his
 wigwam well.

CURTAIN.

(Prepare Tableau—3)

*Weetamoo and her lover, the young chief, Winne-
 purkit; standing, she with downcast eyes, he looking at
 her fondly.*

Reader:—

Child of the forest!—strong and free,
 Slight-robed, with loosely-flowing hair,
 She swam the lake or climbed the tree,
 Or struck the flying bird in air.
 O'er the heaped drifts of winter's moon,
 Her snow-shoes tracked the hunter's way;
 And dazzling in the summer noon
 The blade of her light oar threw off its shower
 of spray.

(Show Tableau—3)

Announce—The Coming of a Lover.

Reader:—

But o'er the heart of Weetamoo
 Their mingling shades of joy and ill
 The instincts of her nature threw,—
 The savage was a woman still.
 Midst outlines dim of maiden schemes,
 Heart-colored prophecies of life,
 Rose on the ground of her young dreams
 The light of a new home,—the lover and the
 wife.

CURTAIN.

(Prepare Tableau—4)

Weetamoo and the young chief, the central figures, surrounded by a group of wedding-guests, including the father and the second Indian maiden, Weetamoo's rival. All in gay attire, war-painted, furs and feathers.

Reader:—

Cool and dark fell the autumn night,
But the chieftain's wigwam glowed with light,
For the Saugus Sachem had come to woo
The chieftain's daughter, Weetamoo,
And laid at her father's feet that night
His softest furs and wampum white.
With pipes of peace and bows unstrung,
Glowing with paint came old and young,
In wampum and furs and feathers arrayed,
To the dance and feast that the chieftain made.

(Show Tableau—4)

*Announce—The Wedding Dance,
(Performers dance and sing and beat a drum.)*

Reader:—

And merrily when the feast was done,
On the firelit green the dance begun,
With squaw's shrill stave and deeper hum
Of old men beating the Indian drum.
Painted and plumed, with scalp-locks flowing,
And red arms tossing and black eyes glowing,
Now in the light and now in the shade,
Around the fires the dancers played.
The step was quicker, the song more shrill,
And the beat of the small drums louder still.
Whenever within the circle drew
The Saugus Sachem and Weetamoo.

CURTAIN.

(Prepare Tableau—5)

Weetamoo and her husband in the new home, seated before wigwam, he contentedly smoking, she weaving a mat.

Reader:—

Through the long winter moons smiled dark-eyed
Weetamoo.

Her heart had found a home; and freshly all
Its beautiful affections overgrew

Their rugged prop. As o'er some granite wall
Soft vine-leaves open to the moistening dew

And warm bright sun, the love of that young
wife

Found on a hard, cold breast the dew and warmth
of life.

The steep, bleak hills, the melancholy shore,
The long, dead level of the marsh between,

A coloring of unreal beauty wore

Through the soft golden mist of young love seen.

For o'er the hills and from that dreary plain,
Nightly she welcomed home her hunter chief
again.

No warmth of heart, no passionate burst of
feeling,

Repaid her welcoming smile and parting kiss,

But in their stead the warrior's settled pride,
And vanity's pleased smile with homage satisfied.

(Show Tableau—5)

Announce—The New Home.

Reader:—

Enough for Weetamoo, that she alone

Sat on his mat and slumbered at his side;

That he who's fame to her young ear had flown,

Now looked upon her proudly as his bride;

That he whose name the Mohawk trembling heard,

Vouchsafed to her at times a kindly look or
word.

CURTAIN.

(Prepare Tableau—6)

Winnepurkit seated. Indian boy enters with piece of bark on which is written a message from Passaconaway. Chief reads and drops head in thought. Weetamoo watches anxiously in background.

(Show Tableau—6)

Announce—The Message from Pennacook.

Reader:—

Then from far Pennacook a runner came,
With gift and greeting for the Saugus chief;
Beseeching him in the great Sachem's name,
That, with the coming of the flowers and leaf,
The song of birds, the warm breeze and the rain,
Young Weetamoo might greet her lonely sire
again.

CURTAIN

(Prepare Tableau—7)

Winnepurkit and his chiefs seated in council, smoking and drinking "strong water."

(Show Tableau—7)

Announce—The Council.

Reader:—

And Winnepurkit called his chiefs together,
And a grave council in his wigwam met,
Solemn and brief in words, considering whether
The rigid rules of forest etiquette
Permitted Weetamoo once more to look
Upon her father's face and green-banked Pennacook.
With interludes of pipe-smoke and strong water,
The forest sages pondered, and at length,
Concluded in a body to escort her
Up to her father's home.

CURTAIN

(Prepare Tableau—8)

*Weetamoo and her father seated on the ground.
She sharpening arrow heads, he idly holding a bow
and gazing at her fondly.*

Reader:—

The hills are dearest which our childish feet
Have climbed the earliest; and the streams most
sweet
Are ever those at which our young lips drank,
Stooped to their waters o'er the grassy bank;
The homesick dreamer's brow is nightly fanned
By breezes whispering of his native land,
And on the stranger's dim and dying eye
The soft, sweet pictures of his childhood lie.

(Show Tableau—8)

Announce—Back to the Old Home.

Reader:—

Joy then for Weetamoo, to sit once more
A child upon her father's wigwam floor?
Once more with her old fondness to beguile
From his cold eye the strange light of a smile.

CURTAIN.

(Prepare Tableau—9)

*Weetamoo stands shading her eyes, looking off into
the distance.*

Reader:—

The long bright days of summer swiftly passed,
The dry leaves withered in autumn's rising blast
And evening cloud and whitening sunrise rime
Told of the coming of the winter time.

(Show Tableau—9)

Announce—Weetamoo Watching for Her Husband.

Reader:—

But vainly looked, the while, young Weetamoo,
Down the dark river for her chief's canoe;
No dusky messenger from Saugus brought
The grateful tidings which the young wife sought.

CURTAIN.

(Prepare Tableau—10)

*Winnepurkit standing. Boy enters with message.
Chief reads it and turns his back, throwing away the
bark on which message was written. Boy turns away.*

Reader:—

At length a runner from her father sent,
To Winnepurkit's sea-cooled wigwam went.

(Show Tableau—10)

Announce—Another Message from Pennacook.

Reader:—

"Eagle of Saugus,—in the woods the dove
Mourns for the shelter of thy wings of love."
But the dark chief of Saugus turned aside
In the grim anger of hard-hearted pride,
"I bore her as became a chieftain's daughter,
Up to her home beside the gliding water.
If now no more for her a mat is found
Of all which line her father's wigwam round,
Let Pennacook call out his warrior train
And send her back with wampum gifts again."

CURTAIN.

(Prepare Tableau—11)

*The father looking dark and angry and shaking
his upraised fist. Runner standing near. Councilors
may be seated around, though this is not necessary.*

Reader:—

The baffled runner turned upon his track,
Bearing the words of Winnepurkit back.

(Show Tableau—11)

Announce—The Angry Father.

Reader:—

“Dog of the Marsh,” cried Pennacook, “no more
Shall child of mine sit on his wigwam floor.
Go,—let him seek some meaner squaw to spread
The stolen bear-skin of his beggar’s bed:
Son of a fish-hawk!—let him dig his clams
For some vile daughter of the Agawams,
Or coward Nipmucks!—may his scalp dry black
In Mohawk smoke before I send her back!”

CURTAIN.

(Prepare Tableau—12)

*Another Indian maiden seated on Weetamoo’s mat
at the door of Winnepurkit’s wigwam.*

Reader:—

Alas, poor bride! * * * *
For love denied and life’s warm beauty flown!
On Autumn’s gray and mournful grave the snow
Hung its white wreaths; with stifled voice and
low
The river crept, by one vast bridge o’ercrossed,
Built by the hoar-locked artisan of Frost.
And many a Moon in beauty newly born
Pierced the red sunset with her silver horn,
Or, from the east, across her azure field,
Rolled the wide brightness of her full-orbed shield.
Yet Winnepurkit came not.

(Show Tableau—12)

Announce—The Rival.

Reader:—

On the mat
Of the scorned wife her dusky rival sat;
And he, the while, in Western woods afar,
Urged the long chase, or trod the path of war.

CURTAIN.

(Prepare Tableau—13)

Winnepurkit standing, holding bow and arrow, or trap, leaning forward, gazing intently into the distance.

Reader:—

The wild March rains had fallen fast and long
The snowy mountains of the North among.
Gnawed by the sunbeams, softened by the rain,
Heaved underneath by the swollen current's strain,

The ice-bridge yielded, and the Merrimack
Bore the huge ruin crashing down its track.
On that strong, turbid water, a small boat
Guided by one weak hand was seen to float;
Evil the fate which loosed it from the shore,
Too early voyager, with too frail an oar!
Sick and aweary of her lonely life.

Heedless of peril, the still faithful wife
Had left her mother's grave, her father's door,
To seek the wigwam of her chief once more.
Down to the vexed center of that rushing tide,
The thick, huge ice-blocks threatening either side,

The foam-white rocks of Amoskeag in view,
With arrowy swiftness sped her light canoe.

(Show Tableau—13)

Announce—Farewell, Weetamoo.

Reader:—

The husband, moistening his moose's meat
On the wet bank by Ucanoonuc's feet,

Saw the swift boat flash down the troubled stream—

Slept he, or waked he?—was it truth or dream?

The straining eye bent fearfully before,

The small hand clenching on the useless oar,

The bead-wrought blanket trailing o'er the water—

He knew them all—woe for the Sachem's daughter!

Down the white rapids like a sear leaf whirled,

On the sharp rocks and piled-up ices hurled,

Empty and broken, circled the canoe

In the vexed pool below—but where was Weeta-moo?

CURTAIN.

Prepare group of Indian women for closing song; which is sung in a harsh, mournful, monotonous chant. All may sing the same tune, or each one an improvised tune of her own. They bear furs and garments which belonged to Weetamoo.

Reader:—

Now sang the children of the leaves beside

The broad, dark river's coldly flowing tide,

Now low, now harsh, with sob-like pause and swell,

On the high wind their voices rose and fell.

Nature's wild music,—sounds of wind-swept trees,

The scream of birds. the wailing of the breeze,

The roar of waters, steady, deep, and strong,—

Mingled and murmured in that farewell song.

Announce—Song of the Indian women.

The Dark-eye has left us,

The Spring-bird has flown;

On the pathway of spirits

She wonders alone.

The song of the Wood-dove has died on our shore.—

Mat wonck kunna-monee!—We hear it no more!

While singing next verse they cast garments from them, as if throwing them on the water.

O dark water spirit!
We cast on thy wave
These furs which may never
Hang over her grave.
Bear down to the lost one the robes that she wore,—
Mat wonck kunna-monee!—We see her no more!

Lift hands toward Sunset.

O mighty Sowanna!
Thy gateways unfold,
From thy wigwam of sunset
Lift curtains of gold!
Take home the poor Spirit whose journey is o'er—
Mat wonck kunna-monee!—We see her no more!

CURTAIN.

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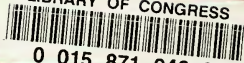
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